

Sūrah Ṭalāq

Central Theme and relationship with the Preceding and Succeeding *Sūrahs*

In Sūrah Taghābun, the previous *sūrah* (verses 14-16), a warning was sounded that a person's wife and children are a source of great trial for him. If he does not remain vigilant, then because of his intense love for them he starts to evade expending his life and wealth for the cause of God. So extreme can this situation be that he adopts a hypocritical behaviour, and in this manner his friendship with them becomes enmity with his own self. At the same time, another warning sounded was that this vigilance does not mean that one should completely sever one's relationship with them; he should, on the contrary, be as much forgiving and forgoing in their matter as is possible for him so that they are not only reformed but he himself is also able to protect himself from any harm from them.

After Sūrah Taghābun, this sensitive issue is explained further in the next two *sūrahs*, and in both love and hate relationships the limits of the correct attitude are delineated so that the way to excesses is blocked. In Sūrah Ṭalāq, it is explained that if for some reason a person starts to hate his wife, then how he should observe limits set by God in her matter, and in Sūrah Tahīm, it is elucidated that how a person should observe the limits set by God in situations of love. It is on the husband-wife relation that a society stands. Everyone encounters it; however, in the first place not everyone is aware of its sensitive limits, and he who is aware of them is not able to properly observe them in the commotion of love and hate. If for some reason, dispute and difference of opinion arises, it manifests into such hatred and enmity that all the bounds and limits of the *sharī'ah* are violated. Similarly, if this relationship is based on love, as it should be, then the respect for the bounds and limits set by God are sacrificed for this love. Both these situations are tantamount to exceeding the limits set by God and deviation from the *sharī'ah* revealed by Him. The result of this attitude is nothing but humiliation in the Hereafter. For this reason, the Qur'ān in two separate *sūrahs* has pointed out that in both these types of situations, a person should not blindly follow his emotions regarding his family; he should, on the contrary, observe the limits defined by God in this regard.

It is evident from this explanation that this *sūrah* and the next are merely an explanation of what is concisely stated in Sūrah Taghābun. In both

these *sūrahs*, the Prophet (sws) is addressed, and this address begins without any preamble which shows that both are in fact a supplement of the previous *sūrah*. This direct address is not related to his person; it relates to his status as the leader and trustee of the Muslims. Examples of such address abound in the Qur'ān. Because of this direct address, the significance of the directives mentioned in these *sūrahs* has become two-fold. The evils which are addressed in them were very common in the age of ignorance that prevailed in Arabia before the advent of the Prophet (sws), and it would be an overstatement to say that such evils exist in every period of civilization. It was a requisite of this situation that in order to redress it, directives are handed out by directly addressing the Prophet (sws). This would make them aware of the fact that when the Prophet (sws) too is told to obey them, then what to speak of others.

Analysis of the Discourse

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following two sections.

Verses (1-7): An explanation of the fact that in cases of divorce it is not lawful to expel one's wife from the house immediately by uttering the divorce sentence; it is necessary – whether a person is rich or poor – to follow the proper way prescribed by the Almighty. People who, in spite of their financial difficulties, set out to observe the limits set by Allah with a view to please Him, shall receive His special help and assistance. Those who violate the limits set by Him because of their lust for wealth shall not cause any harm to the Almighty; they shall only wrong their own souls.

Verses (8-12): Muslims have been warned that it is a historically proven reality that all those nations who had disobeyed Allah and His Prophets have always been severely punished by Him. He has done a great favour on the Muslims by sending towards them a Prophet who has led them to the light of guidance from the darkness of ignorance. If they honour this favour of the Almighty, He shall bless them with the eternal favours of Paradise – otherwise they should remember that to Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and He certainly has the power to do what He intends.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعَدَّتِهِنَّ وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ لَا تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِنْ بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ

يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ لَا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا (١) فَإِذَا بَلَغَ أَجْلُهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَأَشْهِدُوا ذَوِي عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ ذَلِكَ يُوَعِّظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا (٢-٣) وَاللَّائِي يَتُسَّنَّ مِنَ الْمَحِيضِ مِنْ نِّسَائِكُمْ إِنْ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ أَشْهُرٍ وَاللَّائِي لَمْ يَحْضَنْ وَأُولَٰئِ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجْلُهُنَّ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا ذَلِكَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ أَنْزَلَهُ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا (٤-٥) أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِنْ وَجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارُوهُنَّ لِضَيِّقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ وَإِنْ كُنَّ أُولَاتٍ حَمِلٍ فَلَنَفِقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتَّى يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَآتُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ وَأَتَمُّوا بَيْنَكُمْ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَإِنْ تَعَاَسَرْتُمُ فَسَرُّضٌ لَهُ أُخْرَى لِيُنْفِقَ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا (٦-٧) وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِ فَحَاسَبْنَاهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا وَعَذَّبْنَاهَا عَذَابًا نُّكَرًا فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ أَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَدْ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا قَدْ أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ لَهُ رِزْقًا (٨-١١) اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ يَتَنَزَّلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا (١٢)

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

O Prophet! When you divorce women, divorce them in accordance with their waiting period and count their waiting period and have fear of God, your Lord. And do not turn them out from their homes, nor should they themselves go away unless they are guilty of open lewdness. And these are the bounds set by God and they who transgress God's bounds wrong their own souls. You never know that after this God may create some other situation. (1)

So when their waiting term ends, either keep them in wedlock according

to the custom or part with them according to the custom. And call to witness two trustworthy men among you and adhere to this testimony for God. This is a counsel for those who profess faith in God and the Last Day. And they who fear God, God will find a way out for them and will provide for them from where they cannot even think. And God is all-sufficient for he who puts his trust in Him. God surely accomplishes what He intends. God has set a measure for all things. (2-3)

If you are in doubt concerning those of your women who have ceased menstruating, their waiting period is three months, and also of those who have not yet menstruated. And the waiting period of pregnant women is till childbirth. And he who fears God, God will bring ease for him in his affairs. This is the directive of God which He has revealed to you. So he who fears God, God shall forgive his sins and increase his reward. (4-5)

And lodge them in your own homes, according to your means. And do not harass them so as to make life intolerable for them. And if they are pregnant, spend on them until they deliver the child; then if they suckle your child, give them their remuneration and decide this matter according to the custom after mutual consultation. And if you find yourselves in difficulty, another woman can suckle the child. Let the man of means spend according to his means and he whose resources are restricted, spend according to what God has given him. God does not burden a person with more than He has given him. God will also bring relief after hardship. (6-7)

And many a city rebelled against the directives of its Lord and His Prophets! Then stern was Our reckoning with them, and grievous was Our penalty they faced. So they tasted the fruit of their misdeeds: and they met with a disastrous fate. God has also prepared a dreadful torment for them. So have fear of God, O men of intellect and O those who have professed faith. God has sent down to you a reminder; a messenger who reads out to you the clear revelations of God so that he may lead those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds from darkness to light. And those who embrace faith, and do righteous deeds, He shall admit them into gardens watered by running streams. They will abide there forever. A rich provision did God make for him. (8-11)

It is God Who has created seven heavens, and as many earths. His directives descend in them. You may learn from this that God has power over all things, and that God's knowledge encompasses all things. (12)

Explanation

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعَدَّتِهِنَّ وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ لَا

تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِنْ بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ
يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ لَا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا¹

I have already indicated earlier that the Prophet (sws) is not addressed here in his individual capacity but as a representative of the Muslims. The reason for this is that immediately after addressing him, the word طَلَّقْتُمْ is used in which the addressed pronoun is in the plural. It is evident from this use that the directives mentioned here are related to all Muslims. Stating them by addressing the Prophet (sws) has increased their importance much more. The purpose is to engender a feeling of their exaltedness: when the Prophet (sws) is required to obey these directives, Muslims must do so even more.

In the days of *jahiliyyah*, divorce was generally given by a person in the following manner: when he would be angry with his wife for some reason, he would not merely pronounce three divorce sentences in a single breath, he would declare the divorce sentence a thousand times. Simultaneously, he would turn out the wife from her house. He would think that why should he feed her with even one meal when he has divorced her. I have already indicated in Sūrah Baqarah the harm and damage such a procedure has for the husband and wife, his children, the whole family and even the child the wife may be carrying in her womb. Here while keeping this harm and damage in consideration, it is asserted that in a rage of frenzy one must not forget the bounds set by God. All those who do this, do not harm God; they only wrong their own souls.

The sentence إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعَدَّتِهِنَّ وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ refers to the fact that when the stage of divorce comes, then it must be given as per the 'iddat period which must be carefully counted. This aspect has already been explained thus in (٢: ٢٢٩) الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَانٍ فَإِمْسَاكَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ (The divorce may be pronounced twice and then a woman must be retained in honour or allowed to go with kindness, (2:229)). It is evident from this that it is not allowed that a person divorce his wife by pronouncing the divorce three or more times in a single breath. He should divorce her within two months when she is in a state of ceremonial purity which will come twice during this period. Then if he wants to keep her by

1. O Prophet! When you divorce women, divorce them in accordance with their waiting period and count their waiting period and have fear of God, your Lord. And do not turn them out from their homes, nor should they themselves go away unless they are guilty of open lewdness. And these are the bounds set by God and they who transgress God's bounds wrong their own souls. You never know that after this God may create some other situation.

treating her kindly, he can revoke the divorce in the third period of ceremonial purity. However, if he has decided to separate from her permanently, he should let her go by keeping in consideration the custom of the society. Counting this waiting period is essential for both the husband and wife. For the latter, it is essential because as indicated in 2:228 quoted above during this period she cannot marry any other person. For the former, it is essential because during this period he can take her back as his wife if he wants to. Once this period expires, he will no longer have this right. Counting this period is also essential because if during it, it is known that the wife is pregnant then the period will extend to childbirth, and during this period the husband will be responsible to provide maintenance and residence to the wife.

The words **وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ** urge husbands to fear God who is their Lord: they should abide by the limits set by God in spite of the anger they may have for the divorced wives; if they exceed these limits, they should bear in mind that they will be violating the limits of the God whose obedience is mandatory upon them, and from whose wrath and grasp none can save them.

The words **لَا تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِنْ بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ** say that during the waiting period neither do the husbands have the right to turn out their wives from their houses nor is it allowed for the wives to depart from there. Both should live together in the same house so that they are afforded with a chance of reconciliation, and if there is a possibility of any patch-up, then living together could be of benefit for them. God does not like a husband-wife relationship to be severed. Divorce is a remedy of what cannot be helped. The Almighty has allowed it in such compelling situations, and in the eyes of God it is the most detestable of things which have been allowed. Thus to protect His servants from it, He has imposed the condition of the waiting period on every divorce, and has also made it mandatory upon the husband and wife to live in the same house even in this state so that both are able to cool-headedly reflect before taking the final step if there is any chance of saving the marriage.

The word **بُيُوتِهِنَّ** (their houses) used with reference to the wife points to the fact that a husband should not think that the house belongs to him; on the contrary, in this waiting period it also belongs to his wife. For this reason, neither is a husband allowed to turn her out nor is the wife allowed to leave her house in anger. Here leaving the house obviously does not refer to going out for one's everyday needs; leaving here means leaving the house for good.

The only exception to the above stated principle is when a husband has divorced his wife because of some act of "open lewdness" (**فَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ**)

committed by her. This of course refers to fornication and acts related to it; this expression is not conventionally used for a lesser crime. If a husband has witnessed such an act from his wife, and this has angered him so much that he took the step of divorcing her, then neither is it right to demand from him to keep such a lady in his house nor is there any hope that the divine directive of living together will be of any benefit. One should not expect an honourable husband to reconcile with a wife whose unfaithfulness has come to his notice. It is for this reason that the husband and wife who reach the stage of *li'ān* are advised by our jurists to separate from one another. This is because one cannot change the feelings of a husband who has sworn that his wife has committed adultery even though his wife might have legally countered his blame by swearing of her innocence in response. Similarly, if a husband has divorced his wife for such a reason, it would be futile to expect any change of heart from him.

The words **وَلَيْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ** (and these are the bounds set by God and they who transgresses God's bounds wrong their own souls) sound an admonition – a stern admonition. It is not for His own benefit that the Almighty has imposed certain bounds on His servants; it is for their own good that He has done so. Those who transgress them should remember that they will only be ruining their personal, familial and collective expedencies.

The words **لَا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا** refer to the expediency for which men have been asked not to turn out their divorced wives before the waiting period expires and women have been asked not to permanently leave their homes during this period. One never knows that in this period the Almighty may reunite the two after such a severe disagreement. There is a possibility that in this period the husband and wife realize that they should re-assess their attitude and their distanced hearts get united, and a family is saved from being disbanded. If this happens, then it will greatly please God. He wants to see united hearts and families, and does not like that such difference arise between husband and wife that both end up separated, and that the children get separated from the mother and the mother from them.

فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَأَشْهِدُوا ذَوِي عَدْلٍ
مِّنْكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ ذَلِكَ يُوَعِّظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَنْ
يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِأَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا (٢-٣)²

These verses ask the husband to take a final decision once women enter their third period of purity. It was stated in (٢٣١: ٢) وَلَا تُنْسِكُوهُنَّ ضَرَارًا لِتَعْتَدُوا (٢٣١: ٢) (But do not retain them with the intention of harm so that you commit excesses against them, 2:231)) that if husbands decide to retain them, then this should not be to harass them. Obviously, if a husband wants, he can do it because he has the right to take back his wife in this waiting period. However, if he exercises this right to harm and harass them, then he will be using this God-given right for a very unjust and unfair purpose which will entail severe punishment from God.

The words وَأَشْهَدُوا ذَوِي عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ direct the husband to call in two reliable witnesses whether he wants to retain his wife or to permanently separate her so that no possibility remains for a dispute to arise over what actually happened. If this procedure is not adopted, then there is a serious chance that disputes regarding inheritance etc arise in case of the death of either of the two. Our jurists regard this calling to witness to be of the category of *istihsan*, and in good societies this is enough. However, because of the disorder that exists in current societies, just as people have been asked to register their marriage, if they are also asked to register their divorce, then this will safeguard them from a lot of bother.

The words وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ direct Muslims in general and witnesses in particular to discharge their duty of bearing witness for God. This means that firstly, they should not shirk this responsibility, and secondly, when the time arises for bearing witness then they should do so fearlessly and without any lenience purely for the sake of God. They should remember that in this world the Almighty has blessed Muslims with the status of شهداء الله في الأرض (witnesses to the truth). For this reason, a Muslim is not the witness of some person or of either party; he is the witness of God, and on this very bearing of witness rests his repute in the *ummah*.

The words ذَلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ refer to the fact that the three things which Muslims have been asked for above are the essential consequences of belief in God and belief in the Hereafter. Those

2. So when their waiting term ends, either keep them in wedlock according to the custom or part with them according to the custom. And call to witness two trustworthy men among you and adhere to this testimony for God. This is a counsel for those who profess faith in God and the Last Day. And they who fear God, God will find a way out for them and will provide for them from where they cannot even think. And God is all-sufficient for he who puts his trust in Him. God surely accomplishes what He intends. God has set a measure for all things.

who claim to be such believers are directed to adhere to these three things otherwise they should remember that this claim will have no basis.

The sentence وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا assures people who abide by the limits set by God: they should trust God that if they face any difficulty, He will show them a way out. He actually tests His servants by putting them through hardships. Those who deviate from the right path because of a lack of courage and endurance will not find any support from God; on the other hand, those who resolve to abide by the limits set by God in spite of facing hardships will find God easing out their way, as is specified thus by the Qur'ān: (وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا (٢٩:٦٩) (those who struggle for Our cause in spite of opposition, We will surely guide to Our own paths, (29:69)).

The words وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا are a further explanation of what is said above: God will provide for them from where they cannot even think. I have already indicated earlier that a great motive of husbands – especially belonging to the poor class – for separating their wives by declaring the divorces three times in one breath is financial: they think that once they have divorced their wives, why should they bear the responsibility of providing food and residence for them. Here the Almighty has assured them that if they bear this burden to abide by the limits of God, He will provide for them from where they cannot even think of. They must not think that God can only help them through the ways and means they are aware of or what they can think of; on the contrary, there are innumerable means available to Him and man only gets to know them when they manifest themselves. At that time, man is confounded at the help he receives because it appears from where it is inconceivable.

The next portion viz: وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ tells us what makes us worthy of this help of God: He only needs to fully trust God. If a person does so, then he should know that God is sufficient for this help. He does not need means and resources, which are in fact subservient to him. A person should not fear that the adverse circumstances he is facing cannot be changed by God. The fact of the matter is that when God intends to help him nothing can stop him whatsoever.

The only thing that man must know is that just as God has fixed a time for everything, He has also appointed a time for His help. If there is a delay in it, then this is only because He wants to try people whether they show patience or not. A person should rest assured that God will fulfill all His promises. If there is delay in this, then it is only as much as is necessary to try their patience, and this trial is for a person's own well-being.

Here a question arises: If a person does not follow the procedure of divorce mentioned in these verses and divorces his wife through three or more declarations of divorce, then how should this situation be dealt with?

There exists a difference of opinion in the answer to this question between the Hanafites and other jurists. These jurists are of the opinion that all such multiple divorce declarations shall be counted as one; however, according to the Hanafites such multiple declarations will effectively divorce the wife and the husband who has violated the *sharī'ah* in this manner by declaring multiple declarations will be a sinner in the eyes of God.

In my opinion, both these opinions have slight flaws and need to be reformed in due deference for the *sharī'ah* of God. If a person, in spite of such clear directives of the Qur'ān, declares multiple divorces in one go, and he is not even punished for this audacity, then this would mean that this making fun of religion of that person is not even taken any notice of. It is essential to check this violation otherwise the word divorce will become absolutely meaningless even though both the words “marriage” and “divorce” have great significance in the *sharī'ah*. If they are used for the sake of fun, the objectives for which they are spoken materialize. Viewed thus, the opinion held by the Hanafites appears more convincing: they regard such a divorce to be effective; however, there is also one shortcoming in this opinion: it is not enough for a person to be regarded as a sinner in the eyes of God in such a case; this is because if he is also not punished for this violation, people will never give due regard and respect to the procedure prescribed by the Qur'ān. For this reason, it is necessary that besides implementing such a divorce, such a husband should also be given some punishment for jesting with a directive of religion so that those who adopt this wrong procedure are also discouraged.

The basis of the Hanafite opinion rests on an *ijtihād* of 'Umar (rta). As far as I know, the basis of his *ijtihād* is that the divorce of a person who gives it in such a manner should be declared operational – because if he has squandered, he has squandered his own right to take back his wife – however, he must also be punished for violating the limits set by God so that others do not dare follow him. This *ijtihād* is full of wisdom. I follow a certain scope in discussing such juristic corollaries in this *tafsi*# for this reason, I am confining myself to this hint. I have dealt in detail in some of my articles related to jurisprudence.

وَاللَّائِي يَئْسَنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيضِ مِنْ نُسَائِكُمْ إِنْ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ أَشْهُرٍ وَاللَّائِي لَمْ يَحْضَنْ

وَأُولَاتُ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا (٤)³

The previous verses mention the 'iddat (waiting period) of women who menstruate, and whose 'iddat can be determined through their menstrual or purity cycle. Here in this verse the 'iddat of those women is being delineated who have stopped menstruating or have not yet even started menstruating or if they are pregnant as a result of which they are not menstruating. The verse says that the 'iddat of the first two categories is three months and that of the third is till childbirth.

Our exegetes have been greatly puzzled by the condition of *إِنْ ارْتَبْتُمْ* (if you are in doubt) which is imposed on women who have stopped menstruating. People have generally translated this verse thus: If you have any doubt regarding their 'iddat, then God tells you that their 'iddat is three months. Another opinion is that if a lady is passing blood but it is not certain whether it is the menstrual blood or blood caused by some disease, then the 'iddat of such a lady is three months.

The first of these opinion is attributed to Sa'id ibn Jubayr and Ibn Jarīr has given preference to it;⁴ however, this opinion has its weaknesses. If the purpose was only to refer to a question raised by some people, then the conventional Qur'ānic format for this is to cite it as a question. The word *ارْتَبْتُمْ* is not appropriate for this. Moreover, if this was a question, then it should have been about all three types of women referred to here, as is evident from certain narratives. However, the way the word *ارْتَبْتُمْ* is used here shows that it is mentioned as a condition for women who have stopped menstruating because of old age.

The second of these opinions is attributed to Mujāhid, Zuhri and Ibn Zayd.⁵ The first question which raises a doubt on this opinion is that if the issue related to women who were passing blood but they were not sure whether this was menstrual blood or blood because of some disease, then it is not appropriate at all that such women be called those have not menstruated (the words used are *وَاللَّائِي يَيْسُنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيضِ*). Secondly, if this opinion is accepted (? See org), it will mean that if there is no doubt about such a woman who is not menstruating, then there is no 'iddat for her. She will be separated immediately after divorce. However, as far as

3. If you are in doubt concerning those of your women who have ceased menstruating, their waiting period is three months, and also of those who have not yet menstruated. And the waiting period of pregnant women is till childbirth. And he who fears God, God will bring ease for him in his affairs.

4. Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an tā'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, 1st ed., vol. 28 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1415 AH), 158-159.

5. Ibid., vol. 28, 158.

I know, though a lady who is not menstruating and also has not had sexual intercourse with her husband is not bound to observe any *'iddat*. However, a lady who is not menstruating but has not had sexual intercourse with her husband must observe the *'iddat* period.

Because of these doubts it seems to me that the condition of *إِنْ ارْتَبْتُمْ* (if you are doubtful) is to differentiate between a lady who does not menstruate because of age but has had sexual intercourse with her husband and a lady in a similar state but who did not have sexual intercourse with her husband. For if a lady who does not menstruate because of age has had sexual intercourse with the husband there might be a chance of pregnancy if her state was temporary for some reason. A similar situation may arise for a lady who has not menstruated in spite of reaching the age and she has sexual intercourse with her husband. Consequently, on this very basis, since there is no *'iddat* for a lady who has stopped menstruating because of age and also has had sexual intercourse with the husband and for a girl who has yet to menstruate and has had sexual intercourse with the husband but since there is a doubt in their matter, hence such and such is their *'iddat*. It is possible that the question may arise in the mind of a person that if this was the case, then why did the Qur'ān not explicitly state that the *'iddat* of a lady who does not menstruate because of age and who has had sexual intercourse is three months. The answer to this question is that such a statement of the Qur'ān would not have pointed to the underlying reason of *'iddat* – which was essential to be highlighted. This underlying reason is not merely the fact that whether a lady has had sexual intercourse or not: it is the possibility that she may be pregnant.

The words *وَأُولَاتُ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ* inform us that the *'iddat* of a pregnant woman is till childbirth.

A question arises about this directive: In Sūrah Baqarah, the *'iddat* of a widow is stated to be four months and ten days, and the verse under discussion states the *'iddat* of a pregnant woman; what will be the *'iddat* of divorced pregnant woman whose husband dies? Is it four months and ten days or should it extend to childbirth? The answer to this question is that the *'iddat* of a pregnant woman cannot be fixed on the basis of months or days. It has to extend to childbirth. This of course can be less than four months and ten days and can be more also. If it is more, she is liable to observe it, and if it is less, then she should also have the right to benefit from it. In other words, both these directives relate to separate situations, and both will remain implemented in their respective spheres.

The sentence *وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا* mentions with slight change of words what is mentioned in verse two. These warnings are coupled

with directives so that people should not regard the *sharī'ah* to be a burden. The implication is that some people will consider the expenses they have to bear of the divorced women in their *'iddat* to be a burden; however, people who fear God, and will observe as much as they can the limits set by Him, will encounter ease and comfort. If people decide to bear the burden laid on them by the Almighty, then He helps in this matter, and this help comes from where they cannot even imagine – as was stated earlier. One must not make this evil estimation about God that He will burden His servants with what they will not be able to bear; nor should one think that after laying this burden on them, He will leave them to tackle it alone.

ذَٰلِكَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ أَنْزَلَهُ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا (٥)⁶

This verse stresses what is stated earlier: Since these are God's directives that have been revealed to them, they must not regard them to be insignificant and should also not think that He will dissociate from them once He reveals these directives to them; on the contrary, He will help them if they bear their burden, and punish them also if they shirk this responsibility.

The words *وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا* sound an assurance: the Almighty will forgive people who abide as much as they can by the limits set by God. He will blot their minor sins, and increase the reward of their virtuous deeds.

أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِنْ وُجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارُّوهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ وَإِنْ كُنَّ أُولَاتٍ حَمِلٍ فَأَنْفِقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتَّى يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ وَأَتَمِرُوا بَيْنَكُمْ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَإِنْ تَعَاسَرْتُمْ فَسَتَرْضِعْ لَهُ أُخْرَى (٦)⁷

The word *وُجْد* means "earning". The standard of living of a person is in accordance with his resources. Husbands are directed to provide women with the same standard of living which they themselves enjoy: it is not

6. This is the directive of God which He has revealed to you. So he who fears God, God shall forgive his sins and increase his reward.

7. And lodge them in your own homes, according to your means. And do not harass them so as to make life intolerable for them. And if they are pregnant, spend on them until they deliver the child; then if they suckle your child, give them their remuneration and decide this matter according to the custom after mutual consultation. And if you find yourselves in difficulty, another woman can suckle the child.

allowed that husbands themselves live in villas and house their wives in a servant quarter or a garage, and send their left-over edibles to them for their consumption.

The words وَلَا تُضَارُّوهُنَّ لِئُضَيِّقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ refer to the fact that if a person does not accept these directives of God from his heart, then while outwardly obeying them, he can still adopt ways and means to make life so miserable for his wife that it becomes difficult for her to even stay for twenty hours. If this happens, then the very purpose of expediency for which these directives have been given is sacrificed. For this reason, the husbands have been asked not to adopt ways and means which may make them run away from the house.

The words وَإِنْ كُنَّ أُولَاتٍ حَمْلٍ فَأَنْفِقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتَّى يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ give a specific directive for divorced pregnant women; husbands are told that they should provide for them till childbirth. The directive has been emphatically given here because their stay can extend for long periods, and in certain circumstances the nature of their expenses can also be different.

The words فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَاتُّوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ وَأَتَمِرُوا بَيْنَكُمْ بِمَعْرُوفٍ refer to the stage after childbirth. If such a woman suckles the child she has borne to her husband, then the latter must enter into a contract of payment with her through mutual consultation. This payment should be in accordance with the customs of the society and according to the status of the husband.

The words وَإِنْ تَعَاَسَرْتُمَ فَسَتُضَعُّ لَهَا أُخْرَى say that if the husband and wife are finding it difficult to enter into such a contract, they can ask some other woman to suckle the infant. In other words, such a contract is based on the mutual consent and understanding of the parties and on their ease and comfort. No one can be forced against his or her will in this matter. I have already explained in detail the directives relate to suckling under verse 233 of Sūrah Baqarah. Those interested can look them up. It is beyond the scope of this *tafsīr* to delve into intricate juristic issues.

لِيُنْفِقَ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا⁸ (٧)

It is not allowed for the person who has resources at his disposal to keep such women below his standard of living, and neither people who have restricted resources should be burdened beyond their capacity. The Almighty has made each person liable for this responsibility according to

8. Let the man of means spend according to his means and he whose resources are restricted, spend according to what God has given him. God does not burden a person with more than He has given him. God will also bring relief after hardship.

his means and resources.

The words *سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا* sound an immediate assurance to the poor: if they show patience and contentment and in spite of hardships try to abide by the limits set by God, they will be provided with ease and comfort after the trying circumstances they are facing. People who in spite of their poverty and need adopt an attitude of sacrifice, are blessed with abundance in sustenance by the Almighty.

وَكَايْنٍ مِّنْ قَرِيَّةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِ فَحَاسَبْنَاهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا وَعَذَّبْنَاهَا عَذَابًا
تُّكْرًا⁹(٨)

In order to understand the occasion and significance of this verse, readers are advised to take a look at verse 6-8 of Sūrah Taghābun. This is a general warning addressed to both the Quraysh and the Muslims: the Almighty has revealed His teachings for their guidance. If they honour and value them, then this is only for their own benefit, and if they deviate from them, then they must remember that the Almighty has severely reckoned with and gravely punished many a nation that existed before them when they did not honour His directives and the teachings of His prophets. This is a reference to the nations of ‘Ād and Thamūd as well as to the Jews who were blessed with the *sharī‘ah* of God but they did not honour and value it, and as a result were severely punished for this attitude.

The preposition *عَنْ* in *عَتَتْ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا* is a clear indication of the fact that the word *عَتَتْ* encompasses the meaning of *أَعْرَضَتْ*. The implied meaning being that because of arrogance they showed indifference to the directive of their Lord. The word *حَاسَبْنَاهَا* here connotes accountability: the Almighty sternly seized them and gravely punished them. The word *تُّكْرًا* means “severe and horrible”.

فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ أَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا¹⁰(٩)

When these nations were called to account by God, they had to face the consequences of their arrogance, and they met with a dreadful fate. Thus the only path that leads to salvation is the one delineated by God and His prophet. If nations because of their arrogance and rebelliousness deviate from this path, they are necessarily doomed.

9. And many a city rebelled against the directives of its Lord and His Prophets! Then stern was Our reckoning with them, and grievous was Our penalty they faced.

10. So they tasted the fruit of their misdeeds: and they met with a disastrous fate.

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَدْ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا قَدْ أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ لَهُ رِزْقًا¹¹ (١١-١٠)

These verses sound a very clear warning to the Muslims, and at the same time appeal to them in a very effective manner.

The implication of *فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا* is that when the Almighty has dealt with previous nations as per the law and practice mentioned, then it is only wise for men of intellect who have professed faith to fear God. In other words, if people have embraced faith it does prove that they are not slaves of their desires, and are people having sense and reason. Fear of God is a natural consequence of faith; so they must not exceed the limits set by Him otherwise their fate will be no different from the one met by previous nations who deviated from the path towards which God had guided them.

The mention of *الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا* after *يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ* shows that there is an inseparable relationship between faith and intellect. It is essential for a person who possesses intellect to embrace faith. Similarly, if a person does not profess faith, there is something very wrong with his intellect even if he is so competent a person as one who can measure the expanse of the heavens and the earth.

The words *قَدْ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَ* refer to the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty to communicate the truth in a conclusive manner: He has revealed a reminder to them and also sent a messenger who recites the verses of God before people who have embraced faith and have done righteous deeds. The purpose is to show light to people enveloped in darkness. The implication is that even after this elaborate arrangement if people prefer darkness to light, then they themselves will be responsible for this attitude, and they will have no

11. God has also prepared a dreadful torment for them. So have fear of God, O men of intellect and O those who have professed faith. God has sent down to you a reminder; a messenger who reads out to you the clear revelations of God so that he may lead those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds from darkness to light. And those who embrace faith, and do righteous deeds, He shall admit them into gardens watered by running streams. They will abide there forever. A rich provision did God make for him.

excuse to present before the Almighty for remaining astray.

In the expression ذِكْرًا رَسُولًا the first word refers to the Qur'ān, which has also been alluded to by the words ذِكْرِي and الذِّكْر at other places. I have already explained the consequences of this term at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. The Qur'ān reminds a person of everything found in human nature. Furthermore, it also reminds people of the teachings which God revealed in various periods of time to guide them, and which were often rejected by previous nations. It also reminds people of how the Almighty dealt with those who rejected His messengers sent to them. Most of all, it reminds people of the reward and punishment which will necessarily manifest on a particular day at the culmination of this world. This day is the very purpose of this world.

The word رَسُولًا is a permutative (*badal*) of ذِكْرًا and this relationship shows that the two are related to one another as the soul and body are. Thus, just as the word ذِكْر (reminder) is used for the Qur'ān, a messenger is called a مُذَكِّر (reminder) as in (يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا اِنَّكُمْ اَنْتُمْ مُّذَكَّرُوْنَ (۸۸: ۲۱)) (your duty is only to remind them, (88:21)). The life of the Prophet Muhammad (sws) was an embodiment of reminding people of the facts the Qur'ān was revealed for reminding. Thus, whatever the Qur'ān taught, the Prophet (sws) practically adopted. As a result of this, the truth was conclusively communicated to people, and they were left with no excuse to deny it.

The words رَزَقًا اللهُ لَهُ refer to the fact that he who embraces faith and does righteous deeds, should rest assured that this is not a loss-incurring deal; the Almighty has prepared for him a rich provision in the Hereafter. In verse three earlier, he who was ready to sacrifice for others and to trust God was given glad tidings of God's help in this world. Here glad tidings are given to him regarding the Hereafter.

اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْاَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ يَتَنَزَّلُ الْاَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا (۱۲)¹²

Here, at the end, the Almighty has reminded people of His attributes of power and knowledge so that what is said above – whether it relates to warning or assurance – is firmly rooted in their hearts; they get to know that tremendous is God's power and He can do anything He wants to and that His knowledge also embraces everything. Nothing of the seven heavens and the earths is hidden from Him. If a person has done a

12. It is God Who has created seven heavens, and as many earths. His directives descend in them. You may learn from this that God has power over all things, and that God's knowledge encompasses all things.

virtuous act, it is in His knowledge and if a person has done some evil, then this is also in His knowledge. Obviously, when one does not have this deep comprehension regarding the Almighty, one cannot fulfill his obligation of duly respecting the *sharī'ah*.

The words *الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ* inform man of God's extensive power. Man should not think that the universe is all that what he can observe; what he can see is a very limited and tiny part of the overall universe He has created. He has created seven heavens similar to the heavens he sees, and he has not created just one earth on which he walks about; each of the seven heavens has a separate earth.

Seven heavens have been mentioned several times in the Qur'ān and also in other divine scriptures; however, seven earths are only mentioned in this *sūrah*. When seven heavens are mentioned, then it is essential that there exist seven earths too. The heavens and the earth are related to one another as the roof is related to a house. So when the roofs are seven, houses must also be seven. Just as one cannot imagine the earth without the sky, one cannot imagine the sky without the earth. For every zenith here has to be a nadir.

As far as questions are concerned that do all the seven heavens and earths follow the same physical and natural laws and do the same living creatures inhabit them or are these laws and creatures are different, then merely the word *مِثْلَهُنَّ* (similar to them) does not necessitate the first of these inferences. This similarity only relates to the similarity in their number: just as the Almighty has created seven heavens, He has also created seven earths. As far as the laws which are followed in them are concerned, the Almighty has neither disclosed them to us nor can we understand them. It is enough for us to believe in the existence of heavens and earths beyond our heaven and earth.

Our science is wandering about in the infinite expanse of space; if it unveils one secret, it is faced with several others. However, there is no reason to despair. If science is unable to unlock these secrets, *inshallāh* we will get to know about them in the Hereafter. Man has been given very limited knowledge in this world: *وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا* (٨٥:١٧) (little indeed is the knowledge given to you, (17:85)).

The words *يَتَنَزَّلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ* refer to the fact that just as in the sky and earth known to us, God's laws and directives are revealed, similar is the case with other skies and earths.

The implication of the words *لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ* is that the Almighty has unfolded this secret to man so that he knows that there is no limit to God's power. There is an appropriate verb suppressed before *لِتَعْلَمُوا*. Examples of such suppression can be seen in earlier *sūrahs* as

well.

The words *وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا* allude to the second objective of unveiling this secret: just as His power is unlimited, His knowledge is also unlimited; He knows each and everything of all these heavens and earths.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*. *فلله الحمد و له المنه* (gratitude is to Him and favours are from Him)

Rahmānābād,

25th April 1978 AD

16th Jumadī al-Awwal, 1398 AH
